

Place Citation HOXX 47-49C,49,49D, 51 Bridge Street East Benalla (Centre Arcade)

Address	49C, 49, 49D 51 Bridge Street East, BENALLA Centre Arcade		
Heritage Overlay	Proposed for Inclusion in the Benalla Schedule to the Heritage Overlay		
Heritage Overlay Map (proposed)			
Designer/s	Harold Hanlon Architect	Dates	1937
Significance	Local	Builder/s	Unknown
Heritage Overlay Map	The proposed Heritage Overlay map does not include all of the title area. The area to the north (rear) is not significant.	Survey Date	March 2024

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Bridge Street East entrance



Ceiling design



Typical original shop front



Ceramic tiled decorative features in arcade pavement

The following Statement of Significance has been prepared according to the provisions of the Planning Practice Note 01: Applying the Heritage Overlay, (2018)

Assessment against criteria

The following analysis is based on Victorian Government Planning Practice Note 1: Applying the Heritage Overlay (August 2018).

Criterion A: Importance to the course or pattern of our cultural or natural history (historical significance).

Criterion B: Possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of our cultural or natural history (rarity).

Criterion C: Potential to yield information that will contribute to understanding our cultural or natural history (research potential).

Criterion D: Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments (representativeness).

Criterion E: Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics (aesthetic significance).

Criterion F: Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period (technical significance).

Criterion G: Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. This includes the significance of a place to Indigenous peoples as part of their continuing and developing cultural traditions (social significance).

Criterion H: Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in our history (associative significance).

Statement of Significance

What is Significant?

The Centre Arcade at 47 – 49C, 49, 49D & 51 Bridge Street East, Benalla is significant.

Significant fabric includes: the wrought iron grille to the Bridge Street East entrance, the original metal shop fronts and thresholds which include the marble and encaustic tessellated tiling; the ceramic tiled decorative features in the pavement of the arcade and the parapet with its cream and brown brick architectural features.

The Centre Arcade at 47 – 49C, 49, 49D & 51 Bridge Street East, Benalla is largely intact and has retained its integrity.

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How is it Significant?

The Centre Arcade at 47 – 49C, 49, 49D & 51 Bridge Street East, Benalla is of historical and aesthetic cultural heritage significance to the Benalla Rural City.

Why is it Significant?

The Centre Arcade at 47 – 49C, 49, 49D & 51 Bridge Street East, Benalla, constructed in 1937 to the design of Architect Harold Hanlon is of historical significance as it provides evidence of the growth of Benalla that continued through the early 1930s despite the on-set of the Great Depression. By the mid-1930s unlike most places elsewhere in Australia growth started to accelerate. This was supported by the robust government employment and a number of wealthy individuals. (Criterion A)

The Centre Arcade at 47 – 49C, 49, 49D & 51 Bridge Street East, Benalla, constructed in 1937 to the design of Architect Harold Hanlon is of aesthetic significance for its distinctive Interwar architecture. It demonstrates many representative features that are typical for the period such as the original metal framed shop fronts with decorative marble and encaustic tessellated tiled thresholds and a decorative arcade ceiling. These combined with less typical features such as the wrought iron grille, the circular tiled mosaics located in the pavement floor, the design of the parapet with its contrasting cream and brown decorative brickwork and large curved brick wings contribute to its striking interwar arcade architecture. (Criterion E)

Additional Controls

External paint controls apply	Yes
Internal alteration controls apply The arcade area and this includes all of the original metal framed shopfronts, the circular ceramic mandala to the internal pavement area; the thresholds to the shops (marble and encaustic tessellated tiled areas and the decorative ceiling to the arcade.	Yes
Tree controls apply	No
Outbuildings or fences not exempt under Clause 43.01-4	No
Included on the Victorian Heritage Register under the Heritage Act 2017	No
Prohibited uses permitted	No
Aboriginal heritage place	No
Solar energy system controls apply	Yes

Physical Description

The Centre Arcade connects Bridge Street East to the carpark at the rear. The primary entrance is from Bridge Street East and this includes shop fronts on either side of the central arcade.

The Centre Arcade designed by Harold Hanlon in 1937 is unusual feature in Benalla and the region. The entrance to the arcade is defined by a striking wrought iron decorative grille at the apex of the entrance and its design is informed by an intricate mandala. The proportions of the arcade are generous and this includes the height of the walls and the width of the arcade. The original shop fronts (some have been modified) are distinctive for their original metal shop front framing and modernist design. The thresholds of each shop are marble and include tessellated encaustic tiled decorations to the surrounds. The paving to the arcade has a number of unusual ceramic tiled mandala motifs that are located centrally within the arcade. The design of which is modernist. The ceiling to the arcade has a modernist patterning.

The integrity of the arcade is good with few modifications. The changes include the construction of a number of contemporary shopfronts to the east side of the arcade with the shop fronts to the west retaining their integrity.

The parapet above the shops and arcade is distinctive and it extends across both shop fronts and the arcade entrance. It is defined by: a cream face brick parapet with contrasting dark brown brick capping; a recessed central panel with a pronounced centralised vertical cream brick pillar flanked on either side by dark brown panels and this is flanked by curved cream face brick wing walls with horizontal banding of raised cream brick work. The west flank wall appears to be obscured by a metal parapet cladding. The entrance from the rear carpark is undistinguished and has no defining architectural features.

Comparative Examples

There are no known regional comparative examples. The nearest regional examples can be found in Bendigo but none of these have retained the integrity of this arcade or demonstrate the distinctive Interwar architecture as found at the Centre Arcade.

The arcade can be compared to Johnstone Court, Terang (Victorian Heritage Register H2216)

Johnstone Court is a symmetrical brick building, with rendered decoration on the upper level, which extends more than forty metres along the main street of Terang. At the first floor level are three bay windows, in the centre and at either end, with a pediment above the parapet above each one. Along the High Street elevation is a cantilevered verandah with a Wunderlich ceiling. There were nine shops, six facing

High Street and three facing the internal courtyard. The shop fronts are almost entirely intact, with their original glazed tiling, display windows and lead-lighting. Between the centre shops is the entrance to the internal court, with mosaic tiles on the floor spelling out the letters 'JOHNSTONE COURT'. Inside the entrance are gates, which fold into boxes on either side (now permanently open), and two staircases leading to the first floor. The interior court is covered by a glazed barrel vault. The upper walls beneath the vault are adorned with decorative cement work. At the end further from the street, above where the SEC offices were located, is written 'STATE ELECTRICITY COMMISSION OF VICTORIA'. Under the vault opposite this is written 'JOHNSTONE COURT' and there are three plaques noting the initials of the owner (WLJ) and the names of the architect (W P KNIGHTS ARVIA CAMPERDOWN) and builders (McQUEEN SCHABEL TERANG). It is architecturally significant as an outstanding and remarkably intact example of an early twentieth century shopping arcade.

The Centre Arcade demonstrates a quality of design and finishes that are of note it does not express the same quality of design, detailing, scale and intactness as the Johnstone Court. However, as a regional example it is rare in terms of quality of design and finishes. The façade is atypical and demonstrates aesthetic values that are unusual for the period. Internally the intact metal shopfronts, fine tessellated tiled thresholds and unusual mandala like tiled inserts in the floor are unparalleled within the region.

General History

During the 1920s, Benalla increased its strength as an administrative centre for government services. As historian A. J. Dunlop would reflect in 1973, 'Benalla has always been an administrative centre. ... Most government departments are represented in the City.'¹ In 1928, the *Weekly Times* pointed out that, 'The town is the headquarters for the North Eastern District of the State Electricity Commission, and the principal stopping place of the Melbourne and Sydney express.'² The State Electricity Commission's offices and showrooms in Bridge Street East were completed in 1930.³ Benalla had acquired its own telephone exchange in 1906,⁴ but more importantly, telecommunications formed a part of the Post Master General's Office, and the town was already the 'headquarters for the North-Eastern District of the Post Master Generals Department, housed in the Post Office.' With the expansion of the PMG's remit into telecommunications, Benalla also gained 'a new District Telephone Office in Arundel Street.'⁵ In addition, the 'Country Roads Board also had its divisional office in Clark Street. The Forestry Department, Railway workshops and the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission also [had] offices in the city.' Even the

¹ A. J. Dunlop, *Benalla Cavalcade, A History Of Benalla And District*, Mullaly Publications, Canterbury, Vic., 1973, P.156.

² 'Victoria's Country Towns Their Rise And Development No. 13.' Op Cit.

³ 'Electricity Commission. Ceremony At Benalla. Building Financed By Residents.' *The Argus*, Wednesday 5 February 1930 - Page 11.

⁴ Dunlop, Op Cit. P.149.

⁵ Ibid., P.156.

Department of Education had an administrative centre in Benalla.⁶ Such services were not only a source of prosperity underpinning other businesses in the town, but were also insulating in times of economic pain, such as the early years of the Great Depression.

Building in Benalla continued through the early 1930s despite the on-set of the Great Depression; and it began to substantially pick up pace by the mid-1930s: unlike elsewhere in Australia, the town had a comparatively swift recovery from the Depression, having had enough government employees at one end of the spectrum (there were, for example, over 100 railway employees on the electoral roll in 1931⁷), and a substantial number of wealthy individuals at the other end, to see it through.

In 1932, the *Benalla Standard* wrote that 'Several additional new houses [were] are being erected [and the] remodelling of several shops is also proceeding',⁸ and in 1933 it reported, 'It is satisfactory to note that new houses are being built at both extremities of the town.'⁹ Architect Harold Hanlon had more than enough commercial work in town to keep him going, including a new department store for Miller & Co (1933-34),¹⁰ but he still had time to design and oversee the building of 'Kelvin Lodge' on the corner of Smythe and Church Streets, at 42 Smythe Street in 1934.¹¹ Kelvin Lodge took the popular architectural form of a Californian bungalow, as had Hanlon's 'Wooleen' (18-20 Mitchell Street) more than a decade earlier. The Centre Arcade designed by Harold Hanlon, was constructed in 1937 – contributing to the other commercial developments within Benalla during this period.

Place History

The Centre Arcade was designed by Harold Hanlon the notable Interwar Benalla and district architect in 1937.

When the Centre Arcade was opened it was described in the newspaper - Benalla Standard as follows:

'The recently completed Centre Arcade in Bridge street was opened for business last Friday night, and although some of the businesses had not commenced, the Arcade was the centre of attraction. Brilliantly lighted and very modern, the Arcade is a decided acquisition to Benalla's shopping area, and many

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Electoral Roll, Division Of Indi, Subdivision Of Benalla, 1931.

⁸ 'Around The Town', *Benalla Standard*, Tuesday 8 November 1932 - Page 3.

⁹ 'Around The Town', *Benalla Standard*, Friday 17 February 1933 - Page 6.

¹⁰ 'Property And Architecture Benalla Buildings On Corner Sites', *The Herald*, Wednesday 11 July 1934 - Page 18.

¹¹ Per Comm. Marie And John Hanlon To Jacqui Durrant, 13 February 2024.

*expressions of approval were to be heard. The designing and lay-out of the Arcade reflects credit on the architect, Mr. Harold Hanlon, and is one of the finest to be found in any provincial centre.'*¹²

**Relevant Historic Themes as identified in the *Benalla Rural City Gaps Heritage Study: Thematic History*
Prepared by Dr Robyn Ballinger**

6. Building towns, cities and the garden state

6.1 Making regional centres

¹² 'The Centre Arcade,' Benalla Standard, Tuesday 14 December 1937, P 5.